

Day 2: Welcome and Objectives

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I welcome you to the second day of our conference reviewing existing methodologies for wetlands assessments. Today we will focus on “state-trying” methods, I guess we’ll call them, from Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin, and Indiana. This will be a little bit different from the broader national schemes we heard about yesterday.

To start this morning, rather than me talking about what we might do over the next couple of years here in Indiana, I decided it might be an interesting exercise to give you a test. Blank sheets of paper are being distributed, and what I’m going to ask you to do is to write “good” on one side of the paper, and write “bad” on the other side. Then I want you to write as many things in the next 15 minutes that you can think of that would be characteristics of a “good” wetland from your perspective, and characteristics of a “bad” wetland. You don’t get any credit for putting species diversities down; I want specifics. Do the same thing on both sides of the paper. I’m looking for fluency, number of things, and you get extra credit if you put down many, many, many things. I’m looking for diversity of ideas, so if you put down 18 stages of different species as 18 different things, you don’t get extra credit. The characteristics I’m looking for are the characteristics that, when you arrive on site and see that thing, it makes you say “wow this is a great one.” What do you see that makes you say that? I don’t want the theoretical answers. I want the actual answers. And there are other wetlands where you say “oh, good grief, this is horrible—it’s been totally ruined.” What do you see that makes you say that?

We’re going to start playing with these kind of data over the next 6 to 8 months and see if we can’t begin to create an expert system. It will do the same kinds of things that doctors do when they diagnose. So we’re asking you for indicators, if you will, of a good and bad wetland. I’ll leave you to that for 15 minutes and then I’ll collect them. We’ll have a list of names and addresses here, and in the next couple of months we’ll send you the total list of everybody’s “indicators,” and I’m going to ask you to rank them and send them back to me. Then, perhaps in a year or so we’ll get together again and argue about the rankings. So let’s see if we can’t come up with some descriptors of good and bad wetlands. Thank you.